

Courier

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County Communication Strategy rolls out



Debra Bianchi, (l) and Merni Fitzgerald (r) brief Tony Griffin on the new Fairfax County Communication Strategy.

Common message, many voices. This is the driving force behind the newly introduced Fairfax

County Communication Strategy. The communication strategy outlines the county's official policy, procedures and standards for providing information about county services, programs and activities. The goal of the strategy is to provide a cohesive look, feel and message in all of the county's communication with residents, based on the seven Vision Elements that define our values. The strategy will change the focus of our current communica-

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Employees Advisory Council is your link to important issues

The Employees Advisory Council serves as a liaison between employees and county leadership, meeting weekly to discuss issues that affect employees. The council recently held elections for representatives from five employee groups. Those elected are: **Timothy Field** (Group 1), **Matthew Vaughan** (Group 7), and **Dori DeSpain** (Group 8). Representatives serving new terms that were unopposed are **Karen Conchar** (Group 3) and **Randy Creller** (Group 7). Representa-

tives currently serving their second year of a term are **Sarah Goldman** (Group 2), **Steven Baker** (Group 4), **Anita Baker** (Group 5), **Sureyya Kanli** (Group 9), **Stella Norman** (Group 10), **Paula Ferrer** (Group 11).

Beginning June 1, officers elected annually are **Anita Baker**, chair; **Randy Creller**, vice chair; **Paula Ferrer**, treasurer; and **Dori DeSpain**, secretary.

Over the past several months, the EAC has been developing a strategic plan, with

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tion culture so that our messages communicate each agency's work as part of a countywide vision of service.

The communication strategy was initiated in 2004 by **Tony Griffin**, county executive. "We want the information that we provide to our residents to reinforce our values as an organization and we want our residents to feel confident that we are using our resources wisely by coordinating our programs, services and resources," said Griffin.

The Office of Public Affairs and the Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection were asked to head up a development team made up of more than 50 representatives from various county agencies who signed up for five subcommittees.

"This broad representation helped ensure that agency views are a part of developing the communications strategy," said **Merni Fitzgerald**, director of the Office of Public Affairs. "The goal is to help improve the communication process – both externally and internally – by providing specific tools and procedures that clarify requirements and reduce inconsistency."

The development team focused on creating a flexible strategy that provides a comprehensive resource for agencies. Agencies will now have a

"one-stop shopping" request form that provides access to all of the county's communication resources. Information about these communications resources, from news releases to special events, is available on the Infoweb.

"We want a communications strategy that not only accomplishes the goal of a cohesive look, feel and message, but also makes it easier for agencies to provide information," said **Dave Molchany**, chief information officer, the executive sponsor of the strategy.

Debra Bianchi, deputy director of OPA, serves as the overall coordinator of the project. Given the scope of the communication strategy and recognizing that agencies will need time to integrate its elements into their work, a two-phase approach was designed. "The first phase,

which was launched this month, focuses on the elements most critical in helping agencies with their communications needs," said Bianchi.

The first phase of the strategy is easily accessed on the Infoweb at <http://Infoweb/cex/commstrategy/>. Information is listed in six different categories: (1) About the Strategy; (2) Communications Standards and Policies; (3) Communications Resources; (4) Communications Planning; (5) Working with the Media and (6) Emergency Communications. Elements are included in various categories, such as templates for letterhead, news releases, memos and more; tips for working with the media; resources for emergency information; and templates for developing communication plans.

"Having so many county employees involved in the process helped us to identify agency-unique issues and address their communication needs," said Bianchi. "The end result is a strategy that will accomplish the goal of creating a unified look and feel for the county, while still giving agencies flexibility, such as including their agency logos on the county's templates."

Agencies will have until January 2006 to incorporate the new standards, policies and requirements into their communications.

During the next six months, the second phase of the strategy will be developed and introduced in January 2006. This phase will identify a specific process for linking county information to the seven Vision Elements; create a database of county publications and materials on the Infoweb; develop a countywide policy for reviewing and approving external and internal materials; and provide resources for measuring the success of communications initiatives.

To learn more about the Fairfax County Communication Strategy, go to the Infoweb at <http://Infoweb/cex/commstrategy/>. You can send questions, comments or suggestions about the strategy by using the Contact Us link on the Infoweb or by calling the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187, TTY 711. ■

County Vision Elements

- ♦ Maintaining safe and caring communities
- ♦ Building liveable spaces
 - ♦ Connecting people and places
- ♦ Creating a culture of engagement
- ♦ Practicing environmental stewardship
- ♦ Maintaining healthy economies
- ♦ Exercising corporate stewardship

Explore the Infoweb at <http://Infoweb/cex/commstrategy/> to learn more about the strategy.

EAC, from page 1

including a definition of core values, a vision and a mission statement (see box).

The council will continue working on the strategic plan to include the goals that the organization plans to meet. Though the plan is still being crafted, goals discussed include benefit improvements for employees and retirees, employee training in areas such as grievances and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), building alliances with other employee groups and expanding the base of employees to help with change.

Many employees still aren't aware of what the EAC is and are often amazed that there are so many issues and areas of involvement. One of the major employee issues is the Pay for Performance evaluation system. The EAC has continued to advocate for many employee concerns about the Pay for Performance evaluation system. This system provides only 1.7 percent wage increase for a fully proficient employee – which is lower than the Market Rate Adjustment (MRA). Since the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) system was replaced, such an employee must receive a superior performance rating or above to make compensatory gains. This fiscal year, an employee can earn a superior rating in every element and only qualify for 3.4 percent increase when the MRA – which is applied to the scale and not our paycheck – increased 3.07 percent. This results in an upward movement on the pay scale of only 0.33 percent a year. After three years of this scenario, a new employee gets hired at entry level and the employee who has been with the county for three years is only making one percent above the entry level. The problem is that the MRA was developed to keep the pay scale in the market and doesn't take into account the employee. This is resulting in a high number of employees leaving the county within the first five years of employment and the long term effects will be detrimental to the county.

Other areas in which the EAC is working include:

- ♦ Providing assistance for employees needing to file grievances.

- ♦ Representing the employee perspective on many committees, such as the Selection Advisory Committee for the choosing benefit providers, the Employees Communication Board and many more.

- ♦ Reviewing and providing feedback on proposed changes to Personnel Regulations and Classification Specifications.

- ♦ Expressing employee positions to the Board of Supervisors at individual meetings and at the annual budget public hearing.

The council, an important part of the employee representative process, is only 11 people to represent a wide range of employee issues, as you see. Employees are encouraged to get active with the EAC to help make change where it is needed. Please contact your organization's representative and ask what you can do. ■

- by Anita Baker, EAC chair

EAC Guidelines

- ♦ **Values:** Respect, Open Communication, Integrity, Diversity, Responsibility, Creativity and Innovation and Leadership are important values county employees hold.

- ♦ **Vision:** A fair and equitable workplace that encourages and rewards excellence in public service.

- ♦ **Mission:** Peers working together to provide county employees a clear voice through effective representation, responsible leadership and relentless advocacy.



EAC representatives. From left to right, (seated): Stella Norman, Anita Baker and Paula Ferrer; (standing): Karen Conchar, Tim Field, Matt Vaughan, Steve Baker and Dori DeSpain. Not picture are Sarah Goldman, Sureyya Kanli and Randy Creller.

**Classified ads
are on the
Infoweb**

Automated classified ad system is on the Infoweb

It has been a year since the automated classified ad system has been in effect. It's working great, with many satisfied customers.

For many years, a section of *Courier* was devoted to employee classified advertisements. "There was a very tight word limit and often a four-week backup, especially in the summer months. Many times items had been sold or rented by the time *Courier* was printed," said **John Nash**, *Courier* editor.

Working with the Department of Information Technology, an automated system was developed that allows county employees to place classified ads easily and remove them when the items are no longer available. The word limit now is approximately 400 words,

allowing for better item descriptions. "Classified ads are carefully reviewed before being placed in the system with most ads posted within one working day," explained **Lindsey Culin**, Office of Public Affairs content administrator, who said the system averages about 125 ads, ranging from cars for sale to vacation homes for rent.

Because of network security issues, the system is restricted to county employees who must use their User Name and Password to enter the system and place ads. School employees who have access to the Infoweb can view the ads.

Check out the classified ad system now by going to <http://infoweb/classifieds.htm>. ■

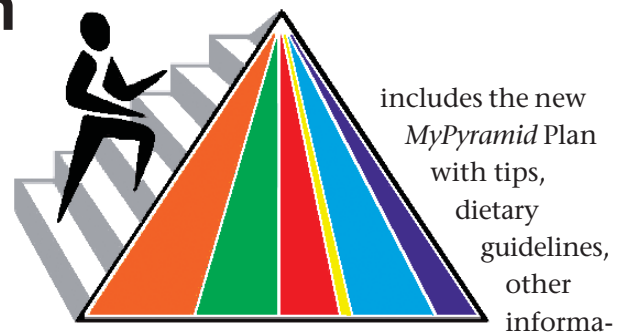
Pyramid of health

Attracted to pyramids? You should be! According to **Chuck Wright**, manager of the Employee Fitness and Wellness Center located in the Government Center, the new Department of Agriculture's fitness pyramid is getting rave reviews and lots of visits to its Web site.

"The new fitness pyramid is a home run in my book," said Wright, who cited the Web site at www.mypyramid.gov as an excellent source for nutrition, fitness and health information.

The *MyPyramid* Web site updates the old food pyramid, now including information on both nutrition and physical activity. A person can register on the Web site and design a program tailored just for them. The structure is based on the premise that good nutrition should be balanced with physical activity.

While it may look a little complicated at first, with a little practice and diligence, *MyPyramid* can provide a wealth of information on recommended amounts of various food groups and



tion sources and a personal tracker. The plan provides a worksheet that allows registered participants who develop their own nutrition and fitness programs to chart their progress. It's almost like having your own online personal trainer.

"We are realizing more each day how good nutrition and physical activity fit together to provide good health," said Wright. "*MyPyramid* is a good resource a person can use to get more information on this subject and perhaps improve their health benefits."

Of course, should county employees need individual personal assistance, physical fitness experts, such as Wright, are located at all the county RECenters. They can help you develop a fitness program and attain your goals. ■



Chuck Wright

Focus on Benefits

County health plans offer many wellness resources

Getting in shape and improving our health always make great New Year's resolutions. But why wait until next year to start? Fairfax County's health plans offer many year-round health and wellness resources to help you and your families live healthier lives.

CareFirst's FairChoice+BlueChoice Point of Service or Blue Preferred PPO plans have a variety of wellness initiatives to choose from:

- ♦ Interactive tools that calculate body mass index and target heart rate and help participants track blood pressure, weight, cholesterol and blood sugar.
- ♦ Self-assessment tools for post-partum depression, stress, or type 2 diabetes.
- ♦ Schedules of local classes, support groups and events addressing health issues.
- ♦ Personalized health tools, including an online health risk assessment.

The CIGNA's Well Aware for Better Health program also offers a wide range of health and wellness tools and resources, including:

- ♦ Personalized action plans (under your doctor's guidance) help with asthma, diabetes, heart disease, low back pain and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).
- ♦ Discounts on products and services such as acupuncture, fitness clubs, laser vision correction, tobacco cessation, massage therapy and weight management programs.
- ♦ CIGNA HealthCare Healthy Babies® program to help improve the health of mothers-to-be and their babies.
- ♦ WebMD's HealthQuotient™, an online personal health assessment tool.

Kaiser Permanente provides its members with an array of wellness options and resources, including:

- ♦ A joint program with Weight Watchers® including community meeting vouchers, an online subscription to Weight Watchers services and a new At Home Kit.
- ♦ Online programs, available at www.kp.org/healthylifestyles, offering assis-

tance in weight management, smoking cessation and relaxation techniques.

- ♦ A discount on fitness club memberships when members get their new memberships through Kaiser partner, GlobalFit.
- ♦ Discounts and preferred rates on chiropractic care, acupuncture and massage therapy through American Specialty Health
- ♦ Through www.healthyroads.com, members can shop online for discounts on more than 2,000 brand-name health products. Members also can tap into more than 65 online tools through the Trackers feature.
- ♦ An online personal health assessment from HealthMedia Succeed®.

Stay tuned for a future article that will look at personal health risk assessment tools offered by county health plans. ■



Health plans' health and wellness tools

■ FairChoice+ BlueChoice or BluePreferred PPO:

1. Go to www.mycarefirst.com.
2. On the page entitled "I acknowledge that," click "I accept" at the bottom of the page.
3. Click on "Personalized Health Tools" on the main page.*
4. Click on "Wellness" for other tools.

■ CIGNA HMO:

1. Go to www.cigna.com/health/consumer.
2. Click on "Medical."
3. Click on the "Health and Wellness" category of interest.
4. For the personalized health assessment tool, go to www.mycigna.com.*

■ Kaiser Permanente HMO:

1. Go to www.kaiserpermanente.org.
2. Click on the "A Member" box.
3. Select "Maryland/Virginia/Washington D.C." from the area drop-down list and click "Continue."
4. Click on the featured health topics or message board areas.
5. Click on "Live Well – Healthy Lifestyle Programs" for personalized tools.*

**Note: To access personalized health assessment tools, you will need to establish and enter your own user ID and password.*

Customer service award honors DFS employee

OK, so everyone smiles, but not quite like **Fran Berkery**. Her smile is infectious and makes you smile when you leave her area.

Fran is the receptionist for the Department of Family Services and a key player in that agency, according to **Dana Paige**, director of DFS.

To honor Fran's good work, the department recently established a new award—*The Fran Berkery Excellence in Customer Service Award*—in honor of a staff member who many consider the “heart” of the department. She is the person you're likely to meet first if you come to the main administrative office of DFS on the fifth floor of the Pennino Building.

For years, Fran's voice has reassured countless county residents who call the department seeking assistance. Fran's genuine warmth, helpfulness and good humor also reassure and encourage the hundreds of

county employees who pass through her reception area. The new award was unveiled at a department-wide awards ceremony May 20 in the Government Center, with, of course, Fran as its first recipient.

Fran is a displaced “nor’easter,” originally from Connecticut who lived in Rhode Island for many years before coming to Virginia. “It was the right move,” she said. She enjoys crafts and ways of creatively embellishing things. “We hung July 4th streamers up in the lobby to add a little pizzaz which proved to be such a hit that I just changed them to flower streamers. They look great,” she laughed.

Fran has been in DFS since 1991 and while her real family consists of “her dog, brothers and sisters, and lots of nieces and nephews,” she said DFS is her “other family.” “I get so much energy from working with everyone here. They are wonderful. They make me smile,” she said.

And if you want to smile, stop by Fran's area in the Pennino Building. It's a guaranteed thing! ■



Fran Berkery

ODRQ - knowledge at your fingertips

How do you find the right county contact quickly? Use the online ODRQ – Office Directory of Resources and Questions.

ODRQ is an automated listing of more than 1,400 county contacts, service access information and frequently asked for phone numbers. It's used regularly by the staff at the information desk in the Government Center to answer visitors' questions.

ODRQ is maintained as part of the main county operating system. First, sign on to the county mainframe as if you were entering your online Time & Attendance record. Then type in ODRQ instead of the usual DBMS. Press <Enter> or <Ctrl> and the listing will activate. You can then search for particular information by pressing F5 to move to “new

query name” and entering the information you want to find. For example, if you want to find a fire station, searching for “fire stations” will give you the location and telephone number of the 39 county fire stations. Additional instructions for using ODRQ are found on the Infoweb at <http://infoweb/opa/odr.q.htm>.

This resource is compiled and maintained by the Office of Public Affairs. Your feedback in making ODRQ more effective or providing updated information is always appreciated. Please call OPA at 703-324-3438, TTY 711 with any suggestions or changes.

For assistance in logging on, please call the Help Desk at 703-222-3535, TTY 711, or send a message to TSCHelp@fairfaxcounty.gov. ■

Once you've used ODRQ, it will become invaluable – and it's right at your fingertips.

Briefs

Understanding DROP Video Now Available

The Retirement Administration Agency has produced a 45-minute video that includes a question and answer session regarding the Deferred Retirement Option Program. Employees eligible to retire and planning receive DROP counseling, must attend a live presentation or view the video before a counseling session can be scheduled. Call the library at 703-324-8318, TTY 711, to reserve a video copy. For more information, contact **Carol Patterson** at 703-279-8200, TTY 711.

Shelter-in-Place Video Available

The Fairfax Joint Local Emergency Planning Committee (FJLEPC), comprised of the towns of Herndon and Vienna, the city of Fairfax and Fairfax County, has produced a video about shelter in place. The video is also available through any of the Fairfax County Public Library branches as well as online through Channel 16's video-on-demand service. If questions, call the FJLEPC at 703-246-4386, TTY 703-385-4419.

Briefs

Animal Adoption

You can find lots of pets looking for a great home at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, 4500 West Ox Road, Fairfax. Adoption times are Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. You can always find important animal care tips and policies on the Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ps/ac/homepage.htm.

Credit Union Members Beware of Scam

Many employees and credit union members have received e-mails from the National Credit Union Administration. This is a scam. Please be advised that the Fairfax County Federal Credit Union and the NCUA will never send an unsolicited e-mail asking for personal information. For more information, call the credit union at 703-218-9900, TTY 711.

Bite Back

As you and your family enjoy outdoor activities this summer, the Health Department has some advice on how to protect against the annoying bites of hungry mosqui-

Briefs

toes with repellents containing DEET, picaridin or oil of lemon eucalyptus. You also should wear long, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing to help protect yourself against bites. Visit the HD's Web page at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fightthebite or buzz **Carl Siversten** at 703-246-2300, TTY 703-591-6435.

Play Ball

For those of us who are mature, wise and energetic, the Northern Virginia Senior Softball league will begin its fall season in September and running through October. Two seven-inning games are played Tuesday and Thursday mornings on Fairfax County fields beginning Sept. 6. There are three skill levels so you won't be out of place at all when you or someone you know signs up for this great program. Find out more information at www.nvss.org or call **Dave**, 703-524-5576, or **Joyce**, 703-860-1876, TTY 711.

Board Presentations

Often agencies and employees are honored before the Board of Supervisors. Pictures of all board presentations, along with short narratives, can be found on the county Web site soon after the board meeting, usually that afternoon. Just go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/OPA/presentations.htm and check things out. You also can download a copy for print or sending to family and friends.

ADA Statements

Don't forget that all brochures, fliers and other printed materials always should have the standard ADA (American Disability Act) statement. If you have any questions about using the statement, please contact the Office of Public Affairs, 703-324-3187, TTY 711. ■

95 years of combined service retires

A group party on June 17, marked a bittersweet occasion. Four long-time Area Agency on Aging employees shared a retirement celebration. There were a few tears and much laughter. The four honorees were Beth Hershner



(30 years); Joanne Brownsword (27 years); Mary Fallon (20 years); and Kathie Schleede (18 years). They will be greatly missed!

Pictured left to right are Beth Hershner, Mary Fallon, Kathie Schleede, and Joanne Brownsword. (Photo by Kim Karlinchak)

MS Office Tips, Suggestions and Reminders

Tips, suggestions and reminders are always good to read. Sometimes, just recalling those things we've forgotten can save time and effort. If you are working in Microsoft Office as most of us do, here are some good practices that may seem a little simple or just pure common sense, but they can be very helpful and save time.

♦ **Save often.** The best protection available is to save your document as you are working. If the system crashes, it really hurts to lose an hour to a day's worth of effort and it is so easy to save. Press Ctrl-S or click the Save button on the Standard toolbar. Remember save your work frequently.

♦ **Learn to use Undo.** Oops, made a mistake! Press Ctrl-Z, the Undo icon on the standard toolbar or choose Undo from the Edit menu right away to make the mistakes go

away. You can keep pressing the Undo option to backtrack through and undo your most recent editing changes.

♦ Move quickly around in a document.

□ To move to the top of a document, press Ctrl-Home.

□ To move to the bottom of a document, press Ctrl-End.

□ To go to the top of the next page, press Ctrl-Page Down.

□ For the top of the preceding page, press Ctrl-Page Up.

♦ Selecting a block of text.

□ Use the mouse. Just click and drag the mouse to highlight and select the text.

□ Use Shift plus the arrow keys to highlight and select the text in the desired direction. To highlight and select a word at a time, press Ctrl-Shift and the left or right arrow key.

Tech Tip #95

Department of Information Technology
Technical Infrastructure Division
Technical Support Center
Fairfax County Government Center
12000 Government Center Parkway
Fairfax, VA 22035
Tel: 703-222-3535, option 1
Fax: 703-222-3396
TTY 711

□ Use the mouse with the Shift key. Click your starting point with the mouse and then move the mouse pointer to your ending point, hold down the Shift and click to highlight and select all the text between the points.


□ Ever get frustrated when you try to select text with the mouse past the bottom of the current page and Word scrolls past your ending point? That is when you need to use the Shift plus the down arrow key instead of the mouse to highlight the text. ■

Did You Know...

Reston Community Center changes recently included welcoming **Shannon DelBorrello** as the adult programs director, replacing **Jai Cole**, and **Shawna Hughes** as the new senior adult programs director, replacing **Eileen Boone**, who was promoted to RCC's general programs director. **Denny Kerns**, RCC executive director, accepted a new position in San Francisco.....**Monica Foote** recently was recognized as the Employee of the Year 2004 by the Department of Administration for Human Services.....Health Department's **Cassandra Mitchell-Baker**, food safety supervisor, received the Jerrold Michael Award from the National Capital Area

Environmental Health Association as the environmental health professional of the year. Also, **Dennis Hill**, environmental health director, **Glenn Smith**, environmental health program manager, and **Martin Thompson**, environmental health specialist III, were recognized by the United States Food and Drug Administration for "outstanding leveraging of resources to assure food safety and security within the FDA Baltimore District during a period of elevated threat level.".....2005 graduates of Leadership Fairfax Signature class included the following county employees: **Shawn Barrett**, Police; **Raul Castillo**, Fire & Rescue; **Katherine Froyd**, DFS; **Jill-Marie**

Kurtz, Public Schools; **Milton Watkins**, Sheriff; **Lynda Williams**, Courts. The Emerging Leaders Institute 2005 graduates included **Pamela Cole**, Health Department; **Tamara Gold**, Sheriff; **Patrick McDade**, Circuit Court; **Jaleh Moslehi**, DAHS; **Cheri Stroup**, Fire & Rescue; and **Isaac Zama**, Police. ■



Courier is published each payday Friday. The deadline for articles and notices is two weeks before publication.

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